Environmental Assessment Office

SERVICE PLAN 2004/05–2006/07

BRITISH COLUMBIA

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Environmental Assessment Office

SERVICE PLAN 2004/05–2006/07

BRITISH COLUMBIA

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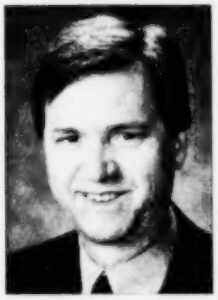
Environmental Assessment Office



I am pleased to present the Environmental Assessment Office Service Plan 2004/05 to 2006/07. The purpose of this plan is to facilitate the public's understanding of the core business of the Environmental Assessment Office, the resources it employs, and its expected results.

The Environmental Assessment Office plays an important role in British Columbia by delivering a thorough, timely and integrated environmental assessment process. It promotes the provincial goal of sustainability by protecting the environment and fostering a strong and vibrant economy.

Recent reforms to the environmental assessment process to streamline and customize review procedures are beginning to demonstrate increased business and industry confidence. More proponents are entering the process voluntarily and new provincial timelines are providing increased process certainty. The Environmental Assessment Office continues to place a high priority on ensuring harmonized reviews when both the federal and provincial environmental processes apply.

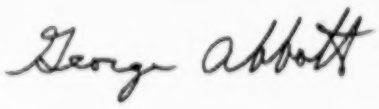
I look forward to reporting more fully on the successes of the Environmental Assessment Office in the future.

George Abbott

Honourable George Abbott
Minister of Sustainable Resource Management

Accountability Statement

The 2004/05 – 2006/07 Environmental Assessment Office Service Plan was prepared in accordance with the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act*. I am accountable for the basis on which the plan has been prepared. All material fiscal assumptions and policy decisions as of January 30, 2004 have been considered in preparing the plan and I am accountable for achieving the specific objectives in the plan.



Honourable George Abbott
Minister of Sustainable Resource Management

February 4, 2004

Environmental Assessment Office Overview

The Environmental Assessment Office leads reviews of proposed large-scale projects in British Columbia. Environmental assessment is a process for identifying, predicting, evaluating and mitigating potentially adverse impacts of major projects. The process examines a broad range of possible effects — environmental, economic, social, health and heritage — and supports balanced decision-making.

Environmental assessment serves the public interest by:

- ensuring that major projects will not threaten public health/safety or adversely affect local communities and the environment, and by instilling public confidence that this is the case;
- supporting sustainable development that improves the provincial economy;
- forestalling project planning errors which could be costly to both private and public interests;
- protecting British Columbia's reputation for environmental integrity in external markets;
- satisfying public expectations for political accountability for project approval decisions; and
- ensuring that decisions on major projects are linked to government's larger responsibility for the management of provincial land and resources.

Resource Summary

The table below shows the budgeted resources for the Environmental Assessment Office's two core business areas.

Core Businesses	2003/04 Restated Estimates[1]	2004/05 Estimates	2005/06 Plan	2006/07 Plan
Operating Expenses ($000)				
1. Major project environmental assessments	2,897[2]	2,897	2,897	2,897
2. Corporate Operations				Rolled into core business item 1
Total	**2,897**	**2,897**	**2,897**	**2,897**
Full-time Equivalents (FTEs)				
FTEs	29	29	29	29
Total	**29**	**29**	**29**	**29**
Capital Expenditures ($000)				
1. Major project environmental assessments	—	—	—	—
2. Corporate operations	103	70	62	62
Total	**103**	**70**	**62**	**62**

[1] These amounts have been restated, for comparative purposes only, to be consistent with the presentation of the 2004/05 *Estimates*.

[2] Ministry of Transportation provided an additional $371,000.

Core Business Areas

The core functions of the Environmental Assessment Office form the basis for fulfilling its mandated responsibilities. These core functions are delivered through two business areas:

Major Project Environmental Assessments

The Environmental Assessment Office oversees and manages the province's major project environmental review process to assess environmental, economic, social and other aspects of proposed projects in the following sectors: industrial, mining, energy, water management (dams, dykes, and reservoirs), waste disposal, food processing, transportation and tourism (destination resorts).

Corporate Operations

Many of the Environmental Assessment Office's corporate services are shared with the Ministries of Sustainable Resource Management and Water, Land and Air Protection. Corporate operations that are the responsibility of the Environmental Assessment Office include service planning, budgeting, staff development, policy and legislation, records management, and management of the electronic Project Information Centre and website.

Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Results

Performance measures and targets, outlined below, track progress towards achieving stated goals and objectives of the organization. Performance measures indicate overall progress in achieving targets with regard to key objectives. Strategies indicate how these objectives will be achieved. Each year, annual Service Plan Reports will compare actual performance with targets set out in the Service Plan. Performance measures and targets will be examined annually to ensure they remain relevant and reflect operational experience and changes in areas relevant to environmental assessment.

The objectives, strategies and targets outlined in this section are based on planned expenditures and staffing levels. Achievement of the objectives and targets may be affected by unpredictable external factors, such as number of projects which are outside the control of the Environmental Assessment Office. Some will depend on the direct, constructive engagement of proponents, the public and First Nations.

The core business areas support two broadly-stated organizational goals, four key objectives, and a series of specific strategies designed to achieve the mandate of the Environmental Assessment Office.

Goal 1: *Efficient and Effective Delivery of Environmental Assessment.*

This goal will be met through two objectives — continual improvement of provincial environmental assessment and greater procedural certainty when both the provincial and federal review processes are triggered.

Objective 1: *Continual Improvement of Provincial Environmental Assessment.*

Improvements to environmental assessment are ongoing. Most recently, reforms to the BC *Environmental Assessment Act* have streamlined and improved the process by making it less prescriptive and more flexible. The strategies set out below address areas of the process to focus improvements.

Performance Measures	2003/04 Actual/Base	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
Duration of government application review.	Base data collection in progress.	90% of application reviews completed in 180 days.	Maintain or improve.	Maintain or improve.
Proponents' level of satisfaction with the review process[1]. • EA review is focused on key issues • Mitigation measures canvassed and applied • EA Report to the Minister is fair and balanced	Develop methodology and undertake survey to determine baseline.	Continual process improvement based on feedback from proponents and identification of key issues.	Continual process improvement based on feedback from proponents and identification of key issues.	Continual process improvement based on feedback from proponents and identification of key issues.
Average annual[2] EAO costs per project for environmental assessment.	The average annual project cost for 2003/04 is $106,000 which is down from $131,000 in 2002/03[3].	Maintain or reduce.	Maintain or reduce.	Maintain or reduce.
Deregulation: reducing unnecessary red tape and regulation.	56% reduction in regulatory requirements of provincial environmental assessment.	Maintain or reduce regulatory requirements of provincial environmental assessment.	Maintain or reduce regulatory requirements of provincial environmental assessment.	Maintain or reduce regulatory requirements of provincial environmental assessment.

[1] Measure changed from 2003/04 Service Plan. See Appendix 2 for details.
[2] Measure changed from 2003/04 Service Plan. See Appendix 2 for details.
[3] The 2003/04 - 2005/06 EAO Service Plan sets out targets of a reduction from 2002/03 levels for 2003/04 and 2004/05 of 5 per cent and 10 per cent respectively. The average annual project cost for 2003/04 ($106,000) exceeds both the 5 per cent and 10 per cent target reductions.

Performance Measures	2003/04 Actual/Base	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
Stage of Enterprise Wide Risk Management[4] Implementation.	Risk Management assessment is intuitive and ad hoc.	Formal risk management assessment applied to key EAO strategies.	Formal risk management assessment updated. Identified risks are proactively managed.	Risk management is strongly integrated with EAO management practices.

[4] Enterprise Wide Risk Management (ERM) is a structured and disciplined approach to managing risk — both adverse effects and potential opportunities — in the achievement of organizational goals. The ERM targets are consistent with those identified in the Ministry of Finance, Risk Management Branch, Maturity Model.

Strategies:

1. *Deliver a timely and cost-efficient provincial environmental assessment process.*
2. *Evaluate the environmental assessment process, and refine based on implementation experience.*
3. *Align environmental assessment and permitting/licensing.*
4. *Fulfill government's legal obligations towards First Nations.*
5. *Apply Enterprise-Wide Risk Management (ERM) to Environmental Assessment Office key strategies by implementing ERM program activities.*

Objective 2: *Enhance federal/provincial cooperation to increase timeliness and certainty, and minimize overlap and duplication.*

When a project is subject to both the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* as well as the British Columbia *Environmental Assessment Act*, the Environmental Assessment Office works closely with the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA) and other federal agencies to ensure the requirements of both levels of government are met through a harmonized process. Under the Canada/British Columbia Agreement for Environmental Assessment Cooperation, the requirements of both processes are met through coordinated assessments to minimize duplication and overlap. Work plans, signed off by the Environmental Assessment Office and CEAA, are developed for each project requiring a harmonized review. They set out the project-specific procedures for completing a harmonized review, which includes scope of project, scope of assessment and project review schedule.

Performance Measure	2003/04 Actual/Base	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
Per cent of harmonized reviews that meet provincial timelines[1].	Finalize new Canada/ BC Agreement on Environmental Assessment Cooperation.	80% of all harmonized reviews meet provincial timelines.	Maintain or improve.	Maintain or improve.

[1] New Measure. Two measures from 2003/04 Service Plan deleted. See Appendix 2 for details.

Strategies:

1. *Early consultation with CEAA and federal agencies and proponents on projects entering the process.*
2. *Develop and implement operational procedures for work plans to facilitate federal/provincial harmonization.*
3. *Maintain the CEAA/Environmental Assessment Office Harmonization Working Group to address federal/provincial coordination issues.*

Goal 2: *Organizational Excellence.*

This goal is achieved by ensuring that the Environmental Assessment Office supports organizational development to optimize its ability to provide efficient and effective delivery of environmental assessment. It also entails ensuring effective and efficient communication with all parties involved in environmental assessment.

Objective 1: *Support organizational development to optimize ability to deliver environmental assessment.*

This objective focuses on creating a healthy, performance-focused environment with proactive leadership and continuous improvement.

Performance Measures	2003/04 Actual/Base	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
Internal policies and procedures are relevant and consistent with new environmental assessment direction[1].	Evaluate existing EAO policies to identify gaps and redundancies.	100% of identified gaps and redundancies addressed.	100% of policies and procedures relevant and consistent.	100% of policies and procedures relevant and consistent.
Per cent of staff with *Employee Performance and Development Plans(EPDP)* in place. Plans are reviewed and updated annually.	All staff have had plans in place since March 31, 2003.	100% EPDP updated.	100% EPDP updated.	100% EPDP updated.

[1] New measure.

Strategies:

1. *Evaluation of existing Environmental Assessment Office policies to identify gaps and redundancies.*
2. *Update the Human Resource Management Plan that includes strategies for staff training, development, recognition and succession.*
3. *Managers to review Employee Performance and Development Plans annually with each of their staff members.*
4. *Provide staff with information and access to development, training and learning opportunities.*
5. *Provide Environmental Assessment Office employees with training (workshops) and tools (tool kit, information, agreement templates) to effectively carry out the government's legal obligations to First Nations and to provide effective advice to proponents on building and maintaining positive relationships with First Nations.*

Objective 2: *Communicate effectively with all stakeholders.*

The British Columbia *Environmental Assessment Act* establishes an electronic Project Information Centre to facilitate access to general information about the environmental assessment process, as well as specific information on individual project assessments. The principal means of accessing the Project Information Centre is through the Environmental Assessment Office website. The Public Consultation Policy Regulation identifies

documentation related to each project environmental assessment that is normally made available to the public through the website. Information on the Project Information Centre is updated on an ongoing basis. The Environmental Assessment Office is committed to improving the access and ease of use of the website since this is the primary mechanism for access to information.

Performance Measure	2003/04 Actual/Base	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
Timely posting of public and agency comments on the EAO's Project Information Centre (ePIC)[1].	All project documentation required by regulation will be posted on ePIC. 90% of all project documentation will be posted on ePIC within 7 days of receipt by EAO.	Maintain or improve.	Maintain or improve.	Maintain or improve.

[1] New Measure to replace two Measures from the 2003/04 Service Plan. See Appendix 2 for details.

Appendix 1. Strategic Context

Vision, Mission and Principles

Vision

Sustainable economic development that reflects the social, cultural and environmental values of British Columbians.

Mission

Provide British Columbians with a well-designed and well-delivered environmental assessment process that reflects the government's objectives for economic growth, strong communities and sustainable resource management, based on maintaining high environmental standards.

Principles

The Environmental Assessment Office is guided by the following principles:

1. **Neutrality** — Neutrally and centrally administered process.
2. **Fairness** — Fair and open process.
3. **Balance** — Decisions are based on impartial, balanced and informed recommendations.
4. **Science-based decision-making** — Best available information, knowledge and technologies are considered and utilized.
5. **Consultative** — Participatory and transparent, ensuring meaningful opportunities for public and First Nations input.
6. **Inter-jurisdictional coordination** — Streamlined process minimizing duplication and overlap.

Organizational Values

The Environmental Assessment Office is guided in its organizational behaviour by the following values:

- cooperation and teamwork;
- respect for the values and opinions of others;
- continuous improvement to ensure quality service;
- a professional and high-performance culture, encouraging innovation and creativity;
- a healthy workplace supporting staff development, recognition, and opportunity; and
- accountability to the people of British Columbia.

Planning Context

Overview — The number of reviewable projects has doubled compared to levels expected when the Service Plan and budget were first developed in 2001. The new *Environmental Assessment Act* and reforms to streamline the environmental assessment process are providing greater process efficiencies for the Environmental Assessment Office and other provincial agencies to partially compensate for this increasing workload. These reforms are also ensuring that British Columbia maintains a fair and balanced process that is competitive with other jurisdictions.

The improvements to British Columbia's environmental assessment process have resulted in 5 projects opting in to the process. Other factors discussed below have resulted in a number of new projects.

Reasons for Increased Project Workload:

- *2010 Olympics* — In 2003, British Columbia was awarded the right to stage the 2010 Winter Olympics and Paralympic Games. It is anticipated that the games will require a number of new venues and infrastructure investments. The Environmental Assessment Office is working with the Olympic Committee on some of these projects to determine which projects will be reviewed.
- *Provincial Energy Plan* — The release of the new provincial energy plan has resulted in two new wind farm projects entering the environmental assessment process this fiscal year, and four or more wind farms are expected in FY 04/05. In addition, it is expected that at least one new run-of-river hydro proposal will enter in the near future and discussions are ongoing with regard to a co-generation facility.
- *Mining Sector Development* — Increasing metal prices have triggered renewed interest in mining in the province. There are a number of mining projects active in the environmental assessment process and a number expressing interest in entering the process.

- *Provincial Infrastructure Development* — Five major projects have been submitted for review under the government's Public/Private Partnership initiative: the Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre, the rapid transit link between downtown Vancouver and the airport, the Sea to Sky Highway improvements, South Fraser Perimeter Road and the New Fraser River Crossing Project.

Economy — British Columbia's independent economic forecast council expects growth in British Columbia's economy to increase to 2.9 per cent in 2004. Further information on the British Columbia outlook may be found in the *Budget and Three Year Fiscal Plan* released with the budget.

Achievement of provincial government budget goals, combined with a broad economic upturn will leave British Columbia well positioned to take advantage of increased economic activity. The Environmental Assessment Office is preparing for a sustained high volume of projects over the next two years.

Market Expectations — Goal One of the government's strategic plan is "a strong and vibrant provincial economy." Attracting, planning, building and operating new facilities in the province contributes to that goal. An efficient and effective environmental assessment process is an important factor in investment decision making.

Federal Government's Role — More than 80 per cent of projects subject to the provincial environmental assessment process must also satisfy federal environmental assessment requirements. As a result of court decisions, new initiatives and the evolution of the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*, the federal government continues to modify and in some cases enlarge its interpretation of federal jurisdiction. This has the potential to conflict with the operation of the provincial assessment process, and to threaten the integrity of provincial decision making involving certain resource issues.

The Environmental Assessment Office is focusing on maintaining a clear position on provincial jurisdiction, while continuing to refine operating procedures with the federal government to ensure harmonized federal/provincial reviews proceed in a smooth and timely manner.

First Nations — The Environmental Assessment Office continues to work with First Nations to support their participation in reviews and to ensure aboriginal interests are appropriately considered through meaningful consultation and accommodation. Proponents, as well as the federal and provincial governments, continue to work with First Nations on issues related to individual projects as well as larger economic and resource issues. Meeting provincial common law obligations while achieving desired review timelines will continue to be a challenge.

Provincial Fiscal Goals — The provincial government is committed to balancing the budget. The Environmental Assessment Office continues to take steps to meet its own budget goals, and to plan for anticipated increased project reviews associated with the economic

gains and special projects, such as the 2010 Olympics and major infrastructure projects. The Environmental Assessment Office will continue to seek innovative approaches and procedural adjustments to adapt to the resources available across government, while continuing to fulfill its mandate.

Highlights of Strategic Shifts and Changes from Previous Service Plan

The Environmental Assessment Office is on track to achieve the improvements outlined in its 2003/04 - 2005/06 Service Plan published last year. The key improvements are reiterated below.

The following strategic shifts were adopted as part of the Environmental Assessment Office's Core Services Review direction. Beginning with the implementation of the new *Environmental Assessment Act* in December 2002 and the other measures described in last year's Service Plan, the Environmental Assessment Office has undertaken major reform of the environmental assessment process:

- from a prescriptive and standardized process to a flexible and customized process that can be tailored to the specific needs of the project;
- from a process that placed a heavy administrative burden on ministries to a process that reduces government's administrative burden and reduces costs;
- from a process that could be quite lengthy to a shorter overall review process that places greater responsibility on proponent deliverables;
- from a process that provided little flexibility in determining which projects would be reviewed to a process that provides more flexibility in designating projects as reviewable.

While the new *Environmental Assessment Act* has only been in effect for a year, initial signs are encouraging. Experience to date with proponents choosing to opt-in to the environmental assessment process suggests increased proponent confidence in the process. At the same time, public consultation efforts have not diminished under the new process, and through negotiations, a high level of First Nations participation has also been maintained. Joint federal/provincial EA reviews face some harmonization challenges which are now being addressed through a new cooperative agreement. The greatest harmonization gains are achieved through joint sign-off on workplans and review schedules. Targeted cost efficiencies are being realized, and the Environmental Assessment Office is gearing up for a sustained high volume of project reviews for the next two years.

The results of the environmental assessment reforms will be reported in the 2003/04 Service Plan Report.

Consistency with Government Strategic Plan

The *Environmental Assessment Office Service Plan 2004/05 – 2006/07* supports the Government of British Columbia's long-term goals of:

- a strong and vibrant provincial economy; and
- safe, healthy communities and a sustainable environment.

The Environmental Assessment Office's principles and organizational values support the government's core values. The goals, objectives, and strategies of the Environmental Assessment Office reflect government's commitment to operate in an innovative, results-orientated, and accountable manner consistent with the following managerial principles:

- high standards of accountability, consultation and ethics;
- focused and efficient delivery of government services;
- social and fiscal responsibility;
- open and transparent government; and
- an innovative and goal-oriented public service.

While no *New Era* commitments refer specifically to environmental assessment, or the Environmental Assessment Office, the environmental assessment process contributes to the achievement of government commitments for:

- a thriving private sector economy and enhanced competitive business climate;
- cutting red tape and providing faster approvals and greater access to Crown land and resources;
- effective and sustainable use of provincial land and resources;
- a scientifically-based, balanced and principled approach to environmental management;
- protecting human health;
- eliminating federal/provincial overlaps that increase costs, and frustrate economic development;
- improving the regulatory regime and reducing the number of regulations by one-third within three years;
- increased focus on customer service and leadership in electronic government;
- open and accountable government; and
- responsible fiscal management of tax dollars.

Deregulation

The Government of British Columbia is committed to reducing unnecessary red tape and regulation by one-third within three years. The Environmental Assessment Office set a target of 33 per cent for fiscal year 2004/05. Legislative and policy changes made in fiscal year 2002/03 resulted in a 56 per cent reduction in the regulatory burden associated with the environmental assessment process in British Columbia. This exceeds the Environmental Assessment Office's target by 23 per cent. This level of reduction will be maintained throughout 2005/06. The new *Environmental Assessment Act* provides for a streamlined review process and allows more procedural flexibility to accommodate project specific circumstances.

Appendix 2. Supplementary Performance Information

Changes to Performance Measures (2003/04 to 2004/05)

Goal/ Objective	2003/04 Performance Measure	2004/05 Performance Measure	Reason for Change
Goal 1 Objective 1	Participants' perceptions of a professional, expert, fair and open review process.	Proponents' level of satisfaction with the review process.	• sample size limitations, cost and unclear survey results. • survey key client group to focus limited resources and provide actionable results.
Goal 1 Objective 1	Average annual government cost per project for environmental assessment.	Average annual EAO cost per project for environmental assessment.	• EAO cost per project better reflects accountability and the impact of reforms to EAO delivery.
Goal 1 Objective 2	Participants' perceptions of efforts made to achieve a harmonized intergovernmental review.	Per cent of harmonized reviews that meet provincial timelines.	• sample size limitations, cost and unclear survey results. • new measure better reflects the desired outcome of efficient harmonization.
Goal 2 Objective 2	Number of website visits per year.	Timely posting of public and agency comments on the EAO's Project Information Centre (ePIC).	• data on website visits proved unreliable and unresponsive to changes to website. • new measure better reflects the desired outcome of efficient communication.
Goal 2 Objective 2	Participants' perceptions of accessibility of project review information.		• sample size limitations, cost and unclear survey results.

Appendix 3. Summary of Related Planning Processes

Information Resource Management Plan (IRMP)

An initiative critical to the success of the reformed environmental assessment process is the use of new technology for electronic service delivery. The electronic Project Information Centre (ePIC, also called the e-Registry) is the primary means of providing review participants with web-based access to environmental assessment information. ePIC is essential for providing efficient and effective environmental assessment, and for ensuring open government and accountable decision-making.

The Environmental Assessment Office will monitor the effectiveness of ePIC and develop system updates and enhancements as necessary. The Environmental Assessment Office's IRMP forms part of the larger MSRM Plan, through shared services with that Ministry. The Environmental Assessment Office will rely on the Chief Information Office and the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management for leadership in the area of standards for electronic service delivery, records management, and the protection of information and privacy.

Human Resource Management Plan

The Environmental Assessment Office is committed to its vision of being a high-performance, learning organization that fosters innovation, creativity and continual improvement to deliver service excellence.

The Environmental Assessment Office plans to achieve this vision through the realization of two broad goals:

1. Proactive leadership.
2. Performance focused workplace.

The Environmental Assessment Office will receive human resource services and assistance from a shared services model. The following objectives will guide the development of our human resources, to ensure that the Environmental Assessment Office staff have the necessary skills and knowledge, and work in a healthy environment:

- organizational structure that supports delivery of Environmental Assessment Office mandate;
- Environmental Assessment Office staff that have had training in essential job competencies; and
- recognition of employee contributions.

Performance measures and targets have been established in the Human Resource Management Plan to track the effectiveness of the Environmental Assessment Office's strategies for meeting these goals and objectives.